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ABSTRACT

Interviews with professionals, a literature search, and a parent survey indicated that parents of toddlers had a need for knowledge about child development. This lack of knowledge was believed to be one factor in the reported use of non-effective discipline techniques, with the linking factor identified as unrealistic expectations. For this practicum project a parent program consisting of 10 weekly sessions covering child development, self-esteem, play, and discipline techniques was designed and implemented. Eleven parents, all part of two-parent families, completed all the sessions. The program included optional supports in the form of a "warm line"--a telephone line parents could call with questions or concerns--and home visits. A book display was included and related to the topic of the particular session. Results of pre- and post-test surveys and reaction sheets indicated that the sessions increased parents' knowledge about child development. Parents reported perceived feelings of increase in comfort and confidence as well as perceived increase in skill levels. Participants also indicated increased use of effective discipline techniques and a decreased use of 7 out of 12 non-effective discipline techniques or punishments. All parents reported that they found the program useful. (Four appendices include the interview questions for local professionals, pretest-posttest survey, reaction sheet, and calendar plan.) Contains 22 references. (Author/HTH)

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ED 382 368

Increasing Parents' Child Development Knowledge and Use of Effective Discipline

By

K. Clare Handforth

Cohort 4F

A Practicum Report Presented to the
Master's Program in Life Span Care and Administration
Specializing in Family Support Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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I herby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for scholarship of other workers in the field and in hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Oct 3, 1994
Date

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Signature of Student

Abstract

Increasing parents' child development knowledge and use of effective discipline. Handforth, K. Clare, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova University, Master's Program for Child Care, Youth Care, and Family Support. Descriptors: Parent Workshops/Parent Education/Toddler Development/Discipline/Parent Knowledge of Child Development/Use of Effective Discipline.

Interviews with professionals, a literature search and a parent survey indicated parents of toddlers had a need for knowledge about child development. This was believed to be one factor in the reported use of non-effective discipline techniques with the linking factor identified as unrealistic expectations.

The author designed and implemented a parent program consisting of ten weekly sessions covering child development, self-esteem, play and discipline techniques. The program included optional supports in the form of a warm line and home visits. A book display was included and related to the topic of the particular session.

The measurements in a pre-post test survey and reaction sheets indicated parents increased their knowledge about child development. They reported perceived feelings of increased comfort and confidence as well as the perception of increased skill levels. Participants indicated an increased use of effective discipline techniques and a decreased use of seven out of twelve non-effective discipline techniques/punishments.

All parents reported the program was found very useful and it

is planned as a likely annual offering with results to be compared.

Appendices include pre-post survey, reaction sheet, calendar plan. Report includes tables summarizing outcomes.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background

In this chapter the setting in which the problem occurred will be described as well as the student's rule in that setting.

The setting in which the problem occurred

The setting for this project was a parent resource program operated within a public health unit located in a small city in northern Canada.

The local community has some interesting and unique features. It is a small city with about thirty-five thousand people. The nearest center of significant size is a five hour drive south. Most city residents have moved from a large distance for employment reasons. The average age is twenty-seven and extended family members are generally too far away for more than annual visits. Birth rates are high and many families have the challenge of parenting combined with the distance from family members, as well as the likelihood of one or both parents working shifts. The twelve hour shifts are extended by two hours of bus travel for each round trip. Many parents describe their situation as single parenting due to the long working hours of their spouses. The local health unit is often mentioned as a source of parenting information and support.

With a mandate for prevention this public health unit provides a wide range of services through the efforts of sixty-five employees. The Parent-Child Resource program is staffed with three professionals and provides early intervention for families with children who have developmental disabilities. It also provides a parent resource program for families with young children. This program will be discussed in detail later as the specific setting for this project report.

The Maternal-Child Nursing Program offers prenatal programs, well-baby clinics for immunization and developmental screening, school health programs, adult immunization, genetic screening and a daily nurse on-call for health questions. Staff are available for community presentations on health issues as well.

Home Care is the largest program and has a growing mandate. This team includes nurses, a physiotherapist, home-support aides and a respiratory therapist. Services range from a senior's wellness program and education to a palliative care service providing twenty-four hour care to terminally ill clients. Needs assessment and home support are also offered for people with physical challenges or mental illness.

A small Dental Program, with one position, offers education services to school children and preschoolers. Until recently this program also offered prevention, education and some treatment to elementary school children with the highest risks as indicated in screenings. The service decrease was due to budget cuts.

Health Promotion is also a one position program. Support is

offered to other health unit programs, interagency project teams and other community groups in the areas of health promotion generally, community development and policy development in particular.

Another program within the health unit is Teen and Adult Health. Here three staff offer sexuality education and clinics including one specifically designed for adolescents.

They work closely with another team of nurses who focus on the control and prevention of communicable disease as well as services to outlying areas in the region. These nurses offer a sexually transmitted disease clinic, an AIDS phone line, tuberculosis clinic and provide a full range of public health nursing to five small native communities surrounding the city.

The health unit also provides Environmental Health Services which targets food premises, water supply, waste disposal and other broad based environmental issues which impact health.

Also, there is a team of therapists in the Speech/Language Program who provide individual or group services for all age groups and a range of communication concerns. They too are involved in prevention services such as the parent-infant drop-in sponsored by Parent-Child Resources.

A part time Medical Officer of Health fills a mandatory position under the Public Health Act. Issues surrounding communicable disease control are the prime concerns of this position as well as liaison between the health unit programs and the medical community.

The health unit is housed in a provincial building in the downtown core. Many services are taken out into the community and every city bus stops at the provincial building. Ramps, automatic doors and elevators support access.

The agency administration includes a finance officer and assistant, as well as a chief executive officer. Each department area has a manager/director who answers to the chief executive officer. This group was recently restructured to decrease the number of directors from eight to three. Two, with small programs, became coordinators at their own request. Three long term directors were let go.

The chief executive officer answers to a local appointed board. This board has all but one member in common with the local elected hospital board. While this local, autonomous board is responsible for the direction of the health unit, the funding comes from the provincial government through the Department of Health. Various service components such as environmental health and communicable disease control have provincial legislative requirements as well as local direction.

The program setting for this project is the previously mentioned Parent-Child Resource Program which offers early intervention and parent support regarding child development and behavior. The early intervention component is one of twenty programs in the province. Staff provide home based support to families whose child, birth to three and a half, has developmental concerns. In this community the concerns range from environmental

risk or premature birth to a diagnosis of Autism or multi-handicapping conditions. Some children have diagnosed handicapping conditions as well as medical concerns. With the diagnostic team in the provincial capital, a five hour drive away, many families are referred for an early intervention assessment to evaluate the need for a trip to the diagnostic center. With early intervention using a non-diagnostic assessment the discussion of concerns and needs requires tact, discretion and delicate skills. Families choosing to use the program move on from assessment to the development of a family service plan. This written plan is directed by the parents with input and support from their early intervention worker and others chosen by the parent. A new assessment and service plan is carried out on a six month schedule.

These parents, as well as any in the community with children under five years, have the option to use the resource services as well. This component was added to early intervention informally and in small steps over the previous ten to twelve years. It was felt that many families were caught in a situation where their child did not have the global developmental delay to warrant early intervention as described by the province, yet were at risk nonetheless. Parenting issues, slight delays or delays in only one area of development raised concerns for the families and staff but did not meet the provincial guidelines for services.

With the full support of the chief executive officer the program broadened the local mandate by adding parent resource services. The resource component became official as a local

program initiative about five years ago and services include a resource library, presentations and consultations for parents of children birth - five years. A part time staff position was increased slightly to full-time and the services are the shared responsibility of the three team members.

These services target families with children between birth and five years of age. The goal is to build on parental knowledge and skills in the area of child development and behavior. Services include daytime phone access for parents or caregivers with questions or concerns. A resource library of books and articles is available as well as short workshops and a drop-in program for parents of young infants.

The Parent-Child Resource Program is staffed with three professionals. One manager is involved in both program direction and direct service delivery. Two other professionals with college/university training offer the full range of services in both early intervention and parent resources. The planning, goal setting and duties are set as a team with an informal, open sharing of ideas and concerns. All three staff members are actively involved in broader agency issues as well.

The student's role in the setting

At this time I hold the position of program coordinator and while title changes have been frequent over the thirteen years I have been in the position, the overall responsibility has been

consistent. This position is expected to plan, initiate and maintain services for families with young children. Early intervention has broad, provincially set guidelines and my involvement in developing stronger guidelines has been an opportunity for growth. Sub-committee work has included the recent development of guidelines and best practice in the planning, delivery and information sharing of child assessments.

I was also the representative for early intervention on a provincial accountability team for public health. At the local level this position, and the contacts it leads to, have provided numerous opportunities to facilitate parent workshops, provide presentations and participate in interagency projects with school systems and other relevant organizations.

The health unit has an agency management committee as well as numerous sub-committees. My previously heavy involvement in this area has lessened with recent restructuring. Smaller programs such as Parent-Child Resources, now have coordinators who will continue to direct services but play a lesser role in the management of the agency as a whole. This shift has led to much anticipation regarding increased time for program initiatives by the three staff members in the program.

Chapter II

Problem Statement

An ongoing concern discussed both in the program and within the community has been the lack of knowledge about child development possessed by parents of young children, notably parents of toddlers. This lack of knowledge was reflected in parental expectations for those skills and behavior that typically develop at an age significantly later than toddler stage. Common parental responses that had been observed and reported were anger, blame and punishment.

Local parents and professionals agreed that while existing parenting programs were useful they generally neglected the child development component and tended to emphasize one approach to discipline. The perceived need was for a parent education program encompassing a strong child development component as well as a variety of discipline approaches and techniques. In response to concerns voiced by parents the approach also needed to offer other supportive contacts in addition to the typical weekly group sessions.

In summary, the perceived problem was a lack of knowledge on the part of parents of toddlers regarding child development and ineffective responses to disciplinary issues.

Documentation of the problem

The project focused on the problem of low levels of knowledge regarding child development in parents of toddlers. This was felt to be a contributing factor in the use of harsh punishment and ineffective discipline techniques by parents.

In the review of the literature, the issue of parental knowledge of child development is raised often within the context of parental expectations and as a foundation when considering factors such as parent-child interaction and disciplinary responses.

Cline (1990) discusses the normal questioning and requests for reasons by bright children as triggers for abuse from parents who are impatient and do not recognize this behavior as normal rather than rude.

Parents may also find that while expecting more than a child can perform in one area, they may fail to recognize increased abilities in another area of development (Bjorklund and Bjorklund, 1990). Either could lead to parental frustration or parent-child conflict along with discipline issues.

Unrealistic expectations, a common theme in the literature on discipline, is cited as a contributing factor to some discipline problems (Golant and Golant, 1989). Statements such as, "Tantrums are a normal part of development" (p.135) are included in some curriculums regarding discipline as recognition of parents' need for reassurance and information (Golant and Golant, 1989).

In his writing on successful families, Guarendi (1991)

includes, "expect childish behavior", (p.187) in his discipline guidelines. The parents interviewed in the book discussed how a child's stage of development is often the reason for frustrating behavior and how remembering that helps diffuse parental anger.

Kopp (1993) writes "One of the most important research findings that has come out of studies of parents and children is that parent's unrealistic expectations about development can lead to harsh punishment and abuse." (p.229)

Leach (1994) voices a more positive aspect of the issue around readiness or expectations. She writes, "Small children will learn almost anything that adults try to teach them provided they are physically, mentally and emotionally mature enough to understand the lessons, and provided they experience some success to keep them motivated." (p.119)

This view lends itself to positively influencing change by offering information on supports or prerequisites for learning rather than discussing only parental deficits. Even when continuing with the discussion, along with the assurances regarding children's capabilities Leach qualifies the emphasis on parental shortcomings by acknowledging some realities in parents' lives such as peer pressure and time constraints. "Busy parents, pressured by the disapproval of observers who neither understand nor enjoy young children, often expect too much, too soon." (p.119)

The issues of parental expectation adds to the concern regarding harsh punishment. Leach (1994) writes, "All physical punishments are potentially dangerous, not only because there is

risk in a large person using any physical force on a small one, but also because since they are not an effective way of changing children's behavior, they tend to be repeated again and again and that means that they are likely to escalate over time." (p.128) If the expectation is one the child cannot meet due to developmental skill levels, the situation shows strong potential for an increase in frustration, both for the parent and the child. The child's feelings of self-worth and competence could also be negatively affected if the setting of unattainable expectations and use of punishment continues.

Lieberman (1993) discusses how a toddler's normal behavior and temperamental style is often beyond the child's control in these early years. She points out that parents, especially when uncomfortable with the child's behavior often attribute negative motives to the toddlers behavior. This may be partly due to the need to justify a negative parental reaction by finding a negative motivation in the child. While noting that this response is very human and not uncommon, she points out it is not very helpful for the parent-child relationship. The relationship between parental awareness of children's attributes and their response to child behavior is noted. Lieberman (1993) writes, "Keeping in mind that these tendencies are part of the child's innate makeup will help us to empathize with the child's experience and to find ways of responding to behavior we do not like in ways that preserve the child's self-esteem." (p.64)

This concern regarding parental expectations of toddlers has

often centered around social areas such as manners, temper tantrums, limits while shopping, etc. Self-help skills such as toileting often raise concerns with some callers to the resource program citing expectations for toileting in children as young as six months although more commonly for one year olds.

This issue of toileting expectations exemplifies a point regarding physical development and the importance of recognizing this influential area on children's capabilities. Bee (1992) writes, "... the lack of a particular physical development may set limits on the behaviors a child is capable of performing... Toddlers cannot easily pick up raisins or Cheerios from their high chair trays until the muscles and nerves required for thumb-forefinger opposition have developed." (p.129) She goes on to call for more attention to this area and cites examples of adults such as sport coaches of young children who expect skills of children several years in advance of typical physical development.

This basic area of concern came up in the discussions with local professionals. Public health nurses, early intervention workers and speech therapists shared examples including daily skill mis-fits such as parents expecting toddlers to match their adult sized brisk walking pace. The child often had to match two or three strides to one of the adult's. The failure to do so regularly led to observations of a child stopping, sitting or asking to be carried. Reports indicated many parents became visibly angry and pulled the child along, threatened to leave the child or spanked them. Several professionals noted this was a

familiar sight at shopping malls.

All three staff in the agency's parent resource program reported the majority of parent calls reflected concerns about normal development or behavior. While parents generally asked for ideas on what they should do, many were surprised when told the child's behavior was typical or that the child's "missing" skill was not expected for their age. Staff report this information often resulted in a notable decrease in the frustration expressed by the parent caller.

Staff expressed concern regarding the need for a comprehensive and respectful approach for sharing basic child development information with parents of young children.

Volunteers and professionals from other agencies in the community voiced similar concerns regarding parents punishing children for normal behavior or for failure to carry out skills normally attained at a significantly older age.

We see documentation therefore of the concern regarding parental knowledge of child development, expressed in the literature as well as by local professionals and parents.

Analysis of the problem

The importance of parental knowledge of child development and the potential impact on parental expectations and discipline has been noted as a strong theme in the literature. Crary (1993) writes of three supports for child guidance, one of which is "reasonable expectations for your children... . Without realistic

expectations for his child, a parent may waste much time and energy attempting the impossible, and discourage both the parent and the child in the process" (p.7).

Santrock (1990) writes, "Parents also need to adapt their behavior toward the child based on the child's developmental maturity" (p.302). This brings forward the issue of parents needing to recognize their child's changing development and needs. The needs of children and parents as well as effective approaches change with factors such as maturity, temperament and environmental stressors influencing the interactions.

Briggs (1987) discusses some of the factors she believes impact parental effectiveness in nurturing their children. Realistic expectations is a significant factor in her article. While clearly asserting awareness of parental love and care, she notes the significant pressures parents often place on their children by expecting behavior that is developmentally beyond the child's capabilities. She discusses how children do not question their parent's knowledge and believe themselves inadequate.

Peer pressure, which so often refers to children, is noted as well in relation to parents when Briggs (1987) writes, "In some communities there seems to be a subtle competition among parents revolving around how soon" (p.18).

Dozens of parents per year have called the parent resource program with concerns about teaching preschoolers to read or toddlers to say the alphabet. While the intentions are to help the child get a head start on academics many disclose they see other

parents doing this and feel they must compete.

Advertising was also noted by parents in the calls. They believed "good" parents provided expensive toys, clothes and activities for young children in order to prepare children for school and the competitive world.

The common sharing of children's accomplishments has become a concern to some of the professionals in the city as well. The parent educators noted that skills and ages of children were quoted by parents as though they were reading a report card.

It raised the concern that parents themselves were feeling a lot of pressure and perhaps in turn were indeed placing that pressure on their children to develop skills beyond their age and developmental stage.

Briggs (1987) goes on to discuss how the lack of knowledge about child development can contribute to an overwhelmed child. While she advocates reasonable limits she cautions that unrealistic expectations can evolve into a stream of daily reprimands for young children. Briggs (1987) notes, "Dr. Jack Canfield reports in a study tallying the number of negatives versus positives two- and three-year-olds heard on any given day. The tally showed 432 negatives to 32 positives." (p.18)

The connection between this often negative, potentially overwhelming environment and parental knowledge of child development is emphasized clearly when Briggs writes, "Knowing the developmental tasks of each age is extremely important if our expectations are to be in line. ... But we often get upset when

they do their developmental homework. Why? Because we often do not know what that homework is" (p.18).

The general concern about parental knowledge of development is linked to the earlier discussed issue of physical developmental limitations and peer pressure on parents in the common toddler skill challenge of toileting. Dodson (1987) writes, "timing is of prime importance - not the grandparents' or the neighbours', but your child's. Wait for your child to have the physical maturity to be able to master this complicated task" (p.166).

This skill area was discussed several times by the professionals interviewed. A common theme was the pressure from grandparents regarding early training. Whether by phone or due to visits to or from grandparents, parents express pressure to report or demonstrate their success in toilet training at an early age. One father reported his mother was calling from another country for toileting updates when his son turned six months old. Parents have also pointed to the common requirement by local child care centers for children to be toilet trained prior to entering their toddler groups. Some parents and professionals volunteered that they had sent untrained children to these centers and said they were toilet trained. Center staff and the children were left to deal with the 'flood' of accidents on an individual basis.

Another theme for expectations contributing to ongoing conflict between parents and toddlers was referred to variously as manners, eating nicely or messy eating. Parents expressed a lot of anger to professionals regarding the "deliberate" actions of

their child.

The specific concerns and needs noted by the professionals and parents sharing is repeatedly emphasized in a more general way in a wide range of literature. Ames, (1992) writes, "Possibly the most useful thing that any parent can know, in efforts to be a good disciplinarian, is what his or her children are like at each stage of development" (p.11).

Certainly the response from parents contacting the parent resource program indicates a notable drop in frustration when parents hear that their child is behaving typically for their age. They are often more open to hearing a variety of possible approaches after the frustration is voiced and a clear explanation given.

Rubinstein, (1988) responds and connects once again, the lack of realistic expectations to the frustration that may lead to ineffective and/or harsh punishment when he writes, "... be realistic about your child's capabilities and skills... To expect him to keep clean, to want him to have internalized controls and to know right from wrong, is only setting the stage for endless No's on your part. This can make household life an ongoing source of frustration and conflict for both you and your child" (p.101).

The relationship between child development knowledge and parental discipline techniques is strongly documented in the literature. Parental expectations are based on knowledge and if a weak knowledge base leads to unrealistic expectations that the child cannot meet, the result is often frustration and anger.

Shelov (1991) refers not only to this important point but discusses how this knowledge on which to base realistic expectations must struggle with parental fantasies.

A solid knowledge base is the foundation for the discipline approaches advocated by Shelov, (1991). He discusses how parents need to know that toddlers require much repetition if they are to avoid angry reminders of rules. They also need to know that the toddler who forgets the rules is not deliberately trying to anger them nor is this behavior an indication of failed parenting. He notes the importance of providing distracters when young children are approaching an undesirable activity and of ensuring a child hears more positive comments than negative in a day. The idea of planning while calm for discipline issues which may frustrate is one I believe to be very important as a preventative measure. As Shelov, (1991) writes, "It's best to decide upon these responses now, while your toddler is young. Otherwise, when he becomes naturally more mischievous in the next few years, you may be more prone to lose your temper and do something you'll regret" (p. 277).

Overall, the literature review noted the importance and impact of various types of parental interaction, responses to children in general and approaches to discipline specifically. To recognize readiness in a child, provide developmental challenges that are also attainable as well as present behavioral expectations that can be met, parents must balance many factors, not the least of which is an understanding of child development.

As a local level, interviews with six professionals involved

as health and parenting resources with parents of toddlers provided additional information. The professionals represented a variety of disciplines, namely social work, public health nursing, parent education, paediatric medicine, speech therapy and early intervention. The interviews were carried out separately with each professional following the framework of questions in Appendix A. The professionals' scores for parents' knowledge of child development averaged "Low", the second lowest of four levels, with no scores above "Medium", the third lowest of four. Effectiveness of parental discipline was rated as "Generally Ineffective", the second lowest of five scales on average. There was a consensus that at least some local parents are very deficient in their knowledge of child development. They also mentioned this lack of knowledge about what to expect as one factor contributing to ineffective discipline. Some noted examples of parents they knew punished their children for an inability to meet unrealistic parental expectations. A point emphasized by several professionals during the interviews was the importance of parent educators or facilitators approaching parents in a constructive manner. If the goal is to support and develop skills, parents must perceive facilitators as open and positive rather than judgemental or blaming, otherwise parents may stop participating or attending.

The interviews also identified some factors perhaps more prevalent in this community which were voiced as contributing factors to the problem of parent knowledge and skill levels. Most local parents are very far away from extended family and therefore

lack that informal source of respite and information. Maternal fatigue was raised by local professionals as many mothers are alone with their young children while fathers work fourteen hour shifts. This can mean fathers leave before the children awake and return after the children are sleeping. Fathers' days off do not always provide mothers with respite from child care as adjustments from shift changes often require a day or two. Chores, hobbies, sports and social activities often fill the father's non-work days.

Also raised as another possible contributing factor to parental stress and unrealistic expectations was the close spacing of children. Mothers were noted to raise expectations to unrealistic levels for their toddlers after having a second baby. The normal regression and aggression responses of the toddlers towards their new siblings was often seen as an unusual behavior problem by parents.

The fatigue and guilt perceived by some professionals to be common in employed mothers was also viewed as a factor contributing to permissiveness and discipline problems. It was felt parents were often unaware of the influence of their behavior on their toddlers. Inconsistency by one parent or between parents was raised as an issue as well.

Overall the professionals interviewed indicated a strong need for support and education for parents in the area of normal toddler development and ways to deal effectively with behavior.

Parent questionnaires were also used to gather information from parents of toddlers. A public health immunization clinic was

supplied with the questionnaire (see Appendix B) and a letter of explanation for parents of toddlers. The questionnaire gathered information about parents' knowledge of toddler development. They marked a list of skills as true or false to indicate whether they were typical of toddler development. Parents also shared information on the amount, from never to daily, that they used the discipline practices listed in the questionnaire.

Some demographics were gathered as well as parental use of local resources. Christmas vacation and very cold winter weather caused parents with young children to cancel some appointments, keeping numbers lower than usual for the clinic. All fourteen respondents marked some child development skills as true for toddlers when in fact the specific skill was beyond the typical ability of a toddler. The most common misconceptions were about toddlers' knowing right from wrong, following three part directions, and drawing ability. Six of the fourteen indicated their belief that toddlers can use the toilet, wipe, wash hands and flush if they are reminded. As well, virtually all respondents used some ineffective forms of discipline or punishment. No respondent used missing a meal as a discipline approach and only two reported shaking their toddler. Ten indicated they used spanking and eleven of the fourteen parents indicated they smack their child's fingers. Six threaten to do something they will not actually do and nine of the fourteen offer love for good behavior. The results indicated a need for parents to have more effective discipline options.

Generally the literature and the interviews as well as the fourteen parent questionnaires point to a validation of the concern. Parents' knowledge of child development, specifically regarding toddlers, needs to be increased. It appears to be one factor contributing to unrealistic expectations and the use of ineffective discipline by parents.

Chapter III

Goals and Objectives

Chapter II explored the literature which describes the importance of parental knowledge of child development and the contribution that knowledge makes to parents' forming realistic expectations. This knowledge base supports effective implementation of discipline techniques such as clear expectations and modelling of expected behavior.

Local professionals involved with parents of toddlers validated the concern regarding parental knowledge of child development. The common use by parents of ineffective discipline was noted as an issue in the interviews.

Parents who answered the questionnaire indicated unrealistic expectations in at least dome developmental areas. Generally they all used some ineffective forms of discipline such as yelling or offering love for good behavior among other techniques.

With the problem documented, the overall goal of this project was to increase toddlers' parents' knowledge of child development and increase skill in the application of discipline. The specific objectives were grouped in three categories: knowledge, attitude and skills.

Knowledge Objectives

1. Participants will increase their knowledge of child development as measured by a pre/post checklist designed specifically for this study. (See Appendix B)

2. Participants will increase their knowledge of available supports/resources and how to access them as measured by a pre/post checklist designed specifically for this study. (See Appendix B)

Attitude Objectives

3. Participants will perceive themselves as more knowledgeable about child development as reported in a pre/post reaction sheet. (See Appendix C)

4. Participants will perceive themselves as more comfortable with discipline issues as reported in a pre/post reaction sheet. (See Appendix C)

5. Participants will perceive themselves as having more skills in disciplining their toddler as reported in a pre/post reaction sheet. (See Appendix C)

Behavior Objectives

6. Participants will increase their use of positive discipline techniques as reported in a pre/post checklist designed

specifically for this study. (See Appendix B)

7. Participants will decrease their use of punishment/ineffective discipline as reported in a pre/post checklist designed specifically for this study. (See Appendix B)

Chapter IV

Solution Strategy

The need was documented in Chapter III for parents of toddlers to increase their knowledge about child development and increase their skills in applying effective discipline techniques.

A literature review, interviews with individual professionals and a parent survey provided helpful information regarding possible responses to these needs.

Review of existing programs, models and approaches

High quality parent education programs appeared to be the most common recommendation by the professionals interviewed. It was felt that the programs needed to focus on one stage of development, i.e. toddler versus the wider group of birth to five years commonly offered in the pre-packaged curriculums.

The generally recommended response of education to perceived parental needs is supported in the literature. Bee (1992) writes, "If you have been brought up in a family in which spanking was the standard method, you may simply not know other ways. If you find yourself in this position, a parenting class ... might be of help." (p.500)

The literature also supports parent training for increasing positive discipline practices as compared to harsher punitive approaches which are reported to contribute to children's aggressive behavior. Vasta, Haith, Miller, (1992) upon reviewing the work of Kazdini (1987) write, "One of the most straight forward

and successful approaches to handling this source of aggression has been the use of parent training techniques (p.470). They also refer to the work of Horne and Sayger (1990) and conclude, "The results of this form of intervention have often been dramatic in changing both the parents' and children's behavior" (p.471).

Many of the solutions mentioned were found within a variety of packaged, commercially available programs focused on parent education. Common themes in these parent programs describe communication skills such as "I messages" and problem solving frameworks. The use of logical consequences for misbehavior is also a common training topic. Sessions may include role playing and generally provide a group format for discussion and sharing between parents. Written resources are common and generally the curriculum is packaged for weekly sessions over a period of six to twelve weeks.

Some common examples are: "Systematic Training for Effective Parenting" (S.T.E.P.), "Parent Effectiveness Training" (P.E.T.), and "How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk". Some offer sub-programs or curriculums focused on a specific age group. For example, S.T.E.P. offers one specifically for parents of birth to five year olds, another focused on middle childhood and another for parents of adolescents.

The focusing on a specific age group is an important aspect for consideration as parents' interests and concerns tend to emphasize their child's current stage. Children's ages are one obvious area for common issues. Also, the most common areas of

parental concern often tie to developmental issues such as toileting, sharing, dating, all associated with children's ages or stages. Not only will common concerns help parents relate to each other in a group but a narrow age range allows for clearly relevant topics in presentations, examples or written resource articles. For instance, examples of communication skills can be given for toddlers but would be difficult if ages ranged from birth to twelve.

One strength of packaged curriculums is their accessibility for a broad range of facilitators. Generally they contain credible information organized in a useable fashion. They are usually consistent with popular childcare philosophy, and have a positive emphasis on communication between parents and children.

Both the Canadian federal and Alberta provincial governments have developed parent education curriculums. Both are consistent with the more broadly marketed programs mentioned earlier in that they focus on communication and logical consequences. The federally sponsored program, "Nobody's Perfect", requires that facilitators be certified. The four day training covers approaches and tips for facilitation. There is no requirement for any background in child development or any group experience. Thus a weakness for this program, even with the certification is that, as with other packaged curriculums some "certified" facilitators have no training or experience in core areas such as child development, parent education or communication skills. Some participants in the certification workshop I attended had never attended a parent group

of any kind and expressed disinterest at being sent for training. My concern with this centers on the importance of facilitators being knowledgeable and skilled, whether through life experience, profession or a combination. The implication that a certified facilitator is qualified can be a misrepresentation which may lead to poor quality programs. Parents who see workshops advertised as having certified facilitators may believe the certification required some combination of education and experience with children and families. This could attribute a level of credibility to the ideas or suggestions given based on an assumption about the facilitator's training or skill.

In the training I attended participants suggested spanking and slapping were effective forms of discipline. One suggested parents should squirt lemon juice in a two year old's mouth to teach the child to stop touching ornaments. Another suggested leaving a three year old in the bath unattended as a way for a parent to gain some free time.

All of these suggestions were accepted by the trainer and all participants are certified facilitators for that program. Some professionals have hesitated to offer the program due to concerns about being associated with the ideas shared by other facilitators. With this particular federal initiative targeting at-risk parents, the need for strongly skilled facilitators becomes critical in my opinion. Parents with significant stresses such as poverty or isolation can present needs which require listening skills, problem solving, a knowledge of community resources and the ability to

judge when a situation requires crisis intervention. A facilitator cannot be expected to address every issue presented but if targeting at-risk parents, they may require a higher skill level than those who focus on prevention or information sharing.

At-risk parents and their children may present concerns that could overwhelm an unskilled facilitator. That same facilitator may be unable to suggest the options and resources which could assist a parent to improve their situation.

A complimentary skill for facilitators leading parent education programs of any type is, I believe, a knowledge of community resources. Sources for income security, health issues, diagnostic testing for learning or behavior concerns and social/recreational activities are common areas of concern in parent groups. There are often core issues for parents and if not addressed in some fashion, will strongly compete with the parenting information for attention.

Other issues which arose in the interviews with local professionals were the need for some parents to have a private discussion about their concerns with a resource person. It was noted that parents preferred to talk to a facilitator they already knew but many volunteer facilitators felt they lacked the background to expand beyond the leader's guide for their particular curriculum. Parents were often reluctant to start again with a new person in a counselling or other professional capacity.

In the parent resource program, where this proposal will be implemented, parents in previous workshops regularly indicated in

evaluation forms that they would like the opportunity for private discussion with the facilitator. These parents have sometimes stated that the workshop participation allowed them to get to know the facilitator and decide they could discuss more serious concerns such as a child's possible developmental delay or their fear of being abusive. While no facilitator can deal professionally with all the potential issues, they should have a comfortable knowledge of who to refer to, how to refer and information to assist the parent in accessing services.

The numbers of parents who wait to speak to facilitators after sessions as well as the previously mentioned evaluation comments indicates a possible need for private time to ask questions or discuss concerns. Parents also consistently ask for more time and information related to child development issues in the city-sponsored S.T.E.P. programs. No local programs provide facilitators who have background knowledge of child development on a consistent basis and the volunteers leading these groups have expressed a need for professional support. Therefore it appeared there was a strong indication that in any effort to enhance parental knowledge of child development or influence their discipline practices, a facilitator's background being strong in the child development area was a significant factor.

While the literature emphasizes a parent education response and the discussions with professionals advocated for parent education sessions I felt the design of an educational offering required parental input.

The "Survey for Parents of Toddlers" (Appendix B) was completed by fourteen parents at the public health clinic. All parents indicated they either "like a lot" or "like somewhat" the option of "talking with another parent". Thirteen respondents indicated a preference for "being part of a group discussion with other parents". Since only nine of the fourteen indicated a preference for professional presentations it was deemed important to provide ample opportunity for parent to parent interaction, with the professional role that of facilitator rather than exclusive presenting of information.

Parents also indicated a strong preference for phone access to a professional with twelve of the fourteen respondents indicating this. The same number indicated books/articles were a preferred source of information on child development.

Description of solution strategy

The literature in general, and parent education curriculums in particular, describe parent-child interaction, positive discipline approaches and clear rules and expectations as positive influences on children's development and behavior. However it seemed that to implement these strategies, a parent would require knowledge of a child's capabilities and awareness of the next cluster of developmental skills. In order to successfully help parents apply the discipline, communication or problem-solving skills generally shared in parent education programs, an effective program should first ensure participants receive clear, accurate information on

child development for their child's age group (i.e. toddler).

A ten week parent education program specifically designed for this project was the core component of the solution strategy. It was held at night and facilitated by me, with assistance from two staff members from the parent resource program. The sessions consisted of four evenings emphasizing child development of toddlers. The following six weekly sessions encompassed a variety of discipline approaches considered within the context of the knowledge base of child development. More detailed session plans are provided in.

The commonly offered approach of a parent education series easily incorporated the initial sessions on child development. This combined with later sessions on a variety of discipline approaches was intended to contribute to parents integrating the ideas about discipline with their unique knowledge of their child as well as the child development information. The program emphasized that development, environment and discipline approaches are all integrated in parent-child relationships and more effectively handled by parents who recognize and consider the interconnection and influences of all factors.

The program was supplemented by optional services for parents to use. A 'warm line' for parents to call during the agency's business hours was offered in response to the initial survey results. Parents then had access to a variety of opportunities for private discussion of questions or concerns. They could avoid the frustration of waiting for days to discuss an issue of importance

to them. This phone line was also intended to encourage parents to access the resource program generally as it would be available even after the parent education series was complete. In addition the parent resource program also continues as a resource for parents with children beyond the toddler age group.

The phone line is answered by any of the three staff in the parent resource program. Having the other two staff assist with the education program allowed parents an opportunity for personally meeting all three of the resource people they might reach on the phone line. This also allowed for parents to choose which staff member(s) they felt most comfortable with.

Parents with concerns about their child's behavior or development could choose to use an additional option the project strategy offered: an observation visit. As well if needs were identified which were beyond the scope of this project, families could be referred to additional services. Parents could also use the observation visit option to observe modelling of approaches or to get feedback on their own use of discipline skills. In the past, parents had identified a need for private consultation and observations in the program's various evaluation sheets. Parents were told that anyone who would like to have an individualized visits but preferred to use the agency meeting room rather than a home visit was welcome to do so.

Because the main facilitator and the two co-facilitators were all available without charge to the parent as agency professionals in the area of child development and behavior, parents could access

a range of knowledge and services beyond the parent education program curriculum itself. Parents would not find the program offerings limited by a packaged curriculum.

One of the biggest concerns in implementing this strategy was anticipated to be the winter weather. Past experience indicated that if temperatures required vehicle parking with electricity for plugging in block heaters, then parents tended to stay home. For this reason most parent programs in this city are offered in the fall or spring rather than winter. It was a concern that results such as attendance would be influenced by the weather especially during February.

The marketing supplies, facility and co-facilitor staff time were approved and provided by the agency.

The preparation for the education sessions and my time for actual implementation were provided as a student during the evening education sessions.

Attendance sheets tracked participation in the ten week education program. Use of the earlier mentioned options; 'warm line' and home visits, was measured through a pre/post test encompassing use of community resources as well as staff statistics.

The pre/post testing also measured changes in participant's knowledge of child development and skill levels in relation to toddlers. Parental use and frequency of a variety of discipline and punishment techniques was also measured in the pre/post test.

Reaction sheets gathered information regarding participants'

perceptions of the programs usefulness, their own knowledge and skill levels and their evaluation of their individual success in reaching personal learning goals to be set during the first session.

Staff also kept written records of phone calls from participants, as well as the use of home visits. The types of issues covered in the calls and visits were noted as well.

The parent survey used to gather data for the initial project proposal was incorporated as part of the pre/post test (Appendix B). It collected data on parent knowledge of child development and on their use of discipline approaches. Pre/post tests were used at the first and last sessions. Reaction sheets on parent perceptions were administered at session one, session five and session ten (Appendix C).

Each session included an opportunity for parents to express views on what was working well or needed changing. A suggestion box was available for private suggestions. It was not used by participants as they stated their preference for verbal suggestions. At the first session parents were given small laminated cards with the project symbols and program phone number. These were fixed to magnetic tape so participants could use them as fridge magnets to encourage "warm line" use.

Each session had myself and one other staff present. A short feedback session was held after the parents left to discuss the strengths and needs observed in the program by both facilitators. Since both the staff who participated as co-facilitators were

comfortable with this role from past experience, the feedback balanced supportive comments with the constructive criticism needed if positive change was to occur. I found the support and suggestions of these colleagues invaluable.

Chapter V

Strategy Employed

The problem, which was described and substantiated in Chapter Three, was the low knowledge levels about child development in parents of toddlers. This is believed to be a significant contributing factor in unrealistic expectations and ineffective use of discipline techniques.

The aspect of this project which is unique is the enhancing of the parent program to include child development sessions as well as more specific discipline techniques than other parenting courses offered in the community.

This chapter will describe the intervention strategy used to address the problem of low levels of child development knowledge in parents as well as improve discipline practices. The results of the intervention will be described and analized.

Action Taken

The main component in the intervention strategy for this project was a ten week program for parents of toddlers. It was offered one evening per week for two hours. The optional half hour extension for discussion was accessed by all participants for each of the ten sessions thus extending the hours to two and a half per session. A detailed description of the ten week course content is provided in the calendar plan found in Appendix D. A brief overview is included in Table 1.

The program was marketed to parents of children between one

and a half years and two and a half years of age. Advertising expenses were avoided by utilizing free space on the local cable television and in a community calendar in the daily paper. Flyers which matched our program brochure in their bright green color were distributed through the public health immunization clinic, two paediatrician's offices, daycares, public library and grocery store bulletin boards.

Sessions were held in a large meeting room in the health unit. Chairs were set in a circle and coffee, ice water and juice were provided. On the evening of the first session the temperature was -27°C and windy. Surprisingly all thirteen registrants attended. At the end of the evening one participant explained that she had misunderstood her sister's explanation and felt her child was too young for her to continue. I agreed and thanked her for her time.

Of the twelve remaining participants, eleven continued for the ten week program. One other participant attended the first six sessions, then notified us that she could not continue due to an ill child.

All participants were from two parent families. The group was very vocal for the most part and participants decided that the stated goals for the program fit their needs. They chose not to write personal goals for their own use.

The sessions were planned to provide child development sessions first. These were intended to provide a basis for behavioral expectations during subsequent sessions which focused on discipline techniques.

A brief overview is provided in Table 1 and a detailed discussion follows.

TABLE 1

CONTENT OF TEN WEEK PARENT PROGRAM

Week 1	Forms filled in:	Survey for Parents of Toddlers (Appendix B) Reaction Sheet (Appendix C)
	Child Development:	Gross Motor and Fine Motor
Week 2	Child Development:	Language
Week 3	Child Development:	Social and Self-Help
Week 4	Child Development:	Play
Week 5	Child Development and Discipline:	Self-Esteem
Week 6	Discipline:	How Children Learn to Behave and Why They Misbehave
Week 7	Discipline:	Reinforcement, Noticing and Strokes
Week 8	Discipline:	Modelling and Helping Toddlers Negotiate
Week 9	Discipline:	Setting Limits
Week 10	Summary, Repeat of Forms:	Survey for Parents of Toddlers (Appendix B) Reaction Sheet (Appendix C)

During the first session, time was spent on introductions and an ice breaker exercise. The program was described and parents were asked for suggestions regarding content and delivery style. Suggestions were solicited at the end of each session regarding the next week's session so that examples, emphasis and book displays could be tailored to the group.

At the first session the group spent time filling out the forms seen in Appendixes B and C. They also were told about the warm line and given fridge magnets I designed with the phone number to call. The option for a home visit was explained to the group as well.

The content for session one was a description and demonstration of gross and fine motor development in the toddler age group. Group discussion then reflected on reactions and reflections.

The physical requirements for sports and ball games were considered and many play expectations were reconsidered during the group discussion.

Parents were then divided into three small groups to share ideas for supporting and encouraging skills in the motor area. They also considered and wrote down potential obstacles to motor development. These ideas were then shared with the others when the large group was reformed.

The book display emphasized choices in play activities, outdoor games, child development generally and safety information. Fine and gross motor play were emphasized.

During the second session the topic for discussion was language development. Language skills were demonstrated with toys and books as props.

In the large group, participants discussed the relationship between communication, frustration and behavior in toddlers. In small groups they shared ideas on helping children build language skills.

During the break in this and all sessions the conversations were very animated and participants often copied titles of books from the display. The display centered on the topic of the particular session.

During the second part of the language session information was shared and modeled on techniques such as parallel talk, self talk and the effectiveness of reflecting rather than correcting. Overheads and a short video borrowed from the health unit's Speech and Language Program supplemented the discussion.

The third session concentrated on social and self-help skills for toddlers. Feeding, dressing and toileting skills generated much discussion. This provided ample opportunity to emphasize the importance of readiness in relation to expectations and frustration.

There was a great deal of laughter during the session and the toileting discussion deteriorated quite rapidly. Stories were swapped among parents about the more ridiculous aspects of their job.

Small groups spent some time on three individual discussions.

One considered the importance of "Checking your timing". Another discussed, "Don't force it. Where could you ease off?" and the third considered, "Think like a kid. What would your child see?" The overall themes of these discussions and the groups' recommendations were shared in the large group.

The fourth session centered around the topic of play. Participants each drew a large picture of their favourite play memories. These were posted and shared amid much laughter over drawing ability and much surprise over the similarities as well as simplicity of the favourite childhood activities.

The important benefits of play were discussed as well as contributions parents can make to play while respecting the child's right to lead the play. Discussion also considered individual styles of play and what could be a toy.

Parents then split into four groups and played with toys. Each of the four centers had toys and household objects which lent themselves to a particular type of play: construction, exploring imaginary or game play. When they joined the large group once more, the ideas for play were shared.

The fifth session was about self-esteem. Parents requested this and I agreed that it was a vital topic which perhaps carried the child development topics most effectively to the discipline sessions. By now, as hoped, the group had identified many examples of development and discipline being interwoven and interdependent. The participants demonstrated in their discussion that they recognized the interrelation even as we discussed a specific topic

in each session.

The session on self-esteem appeared to be a more serious session than earlier ones. Several times I felt it was important to remind parents to be as kind to themselves as they were to others. Several expressed pain in their faces and with words when they considered some of their discipline approaches.

The importance of listening was discussed and an exercise showed parents how hard it was to communicate with someone who had turned away from them. After wryly comparing this to the frequency with which adults 'listen' to children while watching television or reading the paper the discussion continued towards connecting the giving of respect and attention to self-esteem.

Parents also role played making and receiving a request from equal, higher or lower physical heights to exemplify the perception of power from each position.

Listening skills and empathy were demonstrated and discussed. Ways to model and encourage use by children were shared.

The obvious pain on some parents faces led me to end this session by describing some of the examples of positive skills I had observed. The obvious care and interest in their children was also described as well as their efforts to learn even more. The humour I generally used in sessions was not applied during this session as the group appeared very serious and in some cases very sad.

Session six discussed discipline within the topic of how children learn to behave and why they misbehave. Discussion started with observations about the inconsistency of social rules.

The confusion a child can feel over "stealing" was an example. The marble can be taken from the sidewalk but not from the store. A nickel can be taken from a playground. A bike cannot. Suggestions for simple rules were shared, i.e. Always ask a grown-up if it is alright to keep what you have found.

Another topic during this session was "spoiling". The difference between spoiled and having a lot of material things was discussed. Some talk about stereotypes such as those about the single child, was shared as well.

Tips on showing children how to behave were shared in the group and focused on issues such as clear instructions, "do" versus "don't", ensuring wanted behavior is recognized more than unwanted, etc.

The seventh evening the group discussed and practised reinforcement, noticing and strokes. The emphasis was on encouraging parents to attend to the positive things done by their child. Talk also focused on ways to have their children hear that they were appreciated as family members. The group became very self directed for this session and quickly described examples where they had been quiet but would be quicker next time to give a child a positive acknowledgment. Parents expressed a great deal of excitement over suggestions that were cost-free and almost time-free yet obviously powerful. Most left determined to say more to their children about their love rather than assuming the child knew.

The role plays for this evening provided some excellent

examples of toddler behavior. Parents practised deciding on a problem behavior, deciding on a replacement behavior and planning a positive reinforcement for that replacement. Parents laughed a lot and as facilitators we learned a little more about what some parents cope with.

Session eight was focused on how parents could support toddlers in developing negotiating skills. Recognizing that this was a long term investment was emphasized. With verbal skills still limited, especially in younger toddlers, the emphasis was on parents modelling and encouraging children to participate at their individual level. Building on the earlier information about language development assisted this process. Parents demonstrated they understood that in helping children identify the problem they would often need to limit themselves to one or two word utterances by modelling in their role plays and examples. The importance of reinforcing children's participation was also stressed. Role playing demonstrated the possibilities for use in situations from the participant's family life.

The negotiation model used was typical of many problem solving frameworks. It included the steps of helping children identify the problem, encouraging children to suggest ideas and helping them word them in a positive way. Parents would help children choose the best idea and if needed assist them in carrying out the solution and deciding if it worked for them.

Session nine was used to explore the topic of limit setting. The difference between rules and limits was explored as well as

situations for their use. The discussion included the point that limits allowed for some choices and problem solving skills to be used by children.

Skills for parents to use as limit setting tools were explored, i.e. I messages, removal of child from setting, substitute activity, natural or logical consequences, choices, etc.

This session also included some demonstrations on the range of "voices" parents may use. The same messages were stated in neutral, angry or unsure voices, then assessed for likely impact by the group.

Sample phases such as "you need to ..." and "I think you should ..." were also explored for effectiveness.

Some time was also spent demonstrating how to pick up a toddler who is resisting or having a tantrum. Ideas were shared on how to avoid pulling on childrens' arms and ways to avoid the pain of kicked shins for parents. This was in direct response to parent request.

The tenth week had a brief overview of the earlier discussions and information. Post tests were filled in and certificates of participation were given to the parents. Parents brought fruit and sweets to add to the food I supplied and one had decorated a cake in honor of the group. Names and phone numbers were exchanged and the group plans to have a baby shower in the fall for four parents who announced pregnancies during the program. Participants wondered aloud if the program had influenced the pregnancy rate. I assured them it was not one of my stated objectives.

This particular group of parents was very vocal and they laughed a lot. They demonstrated a committment to attend in frigid temperatures and during some difficult family circumstances. One mother left her toddler who has special needs, with a sitter for the first time ever, in order to attend the last class.

The group sessions were, by far, the most used component of the intervention strategy. Attendance ranged from thirteen on the first night to a low of eight for week five. The usual number was ten or eleven.

Only one parent used the home visit option. She was concerned about biting and development in general. In the visit she referred to the content of the course several times.

Two parents used the warm line during the ten week timespan. One was concerned about stuttering in her toddler. She received written information and the name of a free speech therapist service for further screening.

The other wanted suggestions on how he could discuss parenting and discipline with his brother who's approaches were raising concerns with the caller. Ideas were shared and the importance of modelling rather than correcting was emphasized.

Parents tended to use coffee breaks, discussion times or the clean-up time after the session to ask questions or share successes. Two parents noted that friends were successfully using ideas shared from the program.

Results

The results provided will be divided into the same categories as the objectives of the project. Knowledge results will be discussed first in relation to changes in parents knowledge of child development. These will be followed by discussion of results for attitude and then behavior of parents in the program.

Outcomes indicate measurable success for all seven project objectives.

Knowledge

Knowledge objectives relate to the problem area of low levels of parental knowledge about child development as well as their knowledge of available resources. The project was designed, in part, to increase knowledge of participating parents.

The changes in knowledge of child development were measured by parents responding to a series of fifteen true or false statements regarding typical toddlers behavior. These are found in Question 7 of the Survey for Parents of Toddlers (Appendix B).

Changes in participants' knowledge levels in the area of child development are in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2

Percent of Parents With Correct Answer on Child Development

Statement About Toddlers	Week 1	Week 2
1. Stay close or follow parents for 30 min.	77%	82%
2. Toilet trained by two and a half years.	69%	100%
3. Use at least two word sentences.	31%	82%
4. Know right from wrong.	69%	100%
5. Avoid temper tantrums.	46%	91%
6. Understood more words than they say.	92%	91%
7. Follow 3 part directions.	62%	82%
8. Pay attention for 3 to 5 minutes.	23%	36%
9. Complete undress at bedtime.	77%	100%
10. Use toilet, wipe self, wash hands and flush.	77%	91%
11. Play alone for 20 to 30 minutes.	38%	36%
12. Share with other children.	77%	100%
13. Ask for help with words or gestures.	92%	100%
14. Draw a person with at least 4 parts.	85%	91%
15. Imitate the behavior of their parents.	92%	91%

NOTE: WEEK 1 = 13 Parents

WEEK 10 = 11 Parents

The majority of the child development statements in the survey received a higher number of correct answers in Week Ten than in Week One. Areas such as temper tantrums and language changed the most. Correct responses about tantrums improved from 46% to 91%. Language related responses improved from 31% correct to 82%. Overall, twelve of the fifteen child development areas had more correct responses after the parent program.

Two statements about child development had less positive results than others. Correct responses to Statement 8 about toddler's ability to pay attention increased from 23% to 36%. Statement 11 which is similar in subject, deals with toddlers playing alone for 20 - 30 minutes. The correct replies decreased from 38% to 36%. The facilitators speculated on some connections between this result and the course emphasis a parental interaction in play. Assumptions may have been made by parents about the techniques being used in the survey statements.

Another knowledge related area had to do with resources and was measured by Questions 8 and 9 in the Survey for Parents of Toddlers (see Appendix B).

The majority were accessing or aware of the same sources for pre and post testing. Awareness was high for the pre-test and our community has a small core of supports. However the number who indicated "family/friends" as most helpful increased from two to seven participants. This was possibly reflected in the sessions where people referred to each other as new contacts for support. The group also exchanged phone numbers. This development of an

informal support system was seen as very positive by the facilitators.

The same increase from two to seven participants indicated books as one of the two most helpful sources of support. The group indicated a strong interest in the book displays and made suggestions for topics they would like included for the next week.

Attitudes

The attitude objectives related to parents perceptions about their own knowledge, skill and comfort with child development and discipline. Results were measured by parents responding to the Reaction Sheet designed specifically for this project (see Appendix C).

These objectives about parental attitudes showed the largest positive change. Results are summarized in TABLE 3 with discussion following.

TABLE 3

Parents Who Report:

	Week 1	Week 10
1. High or medium/high knowledge of child development.	54%	92%
2. Needing little or no information on toddler development.	31%	83%
3. Fairly or very comfortable with discipline.	68%	100%
4. At least a satisfactory number of discipline skill.	54%	100%
5. Comfort or confident/comfort about overall parenting of toddler.	80%	100%

Parents who perceived their knowledge levels as medium/high or high increased from 54% to 92%. Those who felt fairly or very comfortable with discipline increased from 68% to 100%.

The number who perceived their discipline skills as being satisfactory or large in number increased from 54% to 100%. All five perception areas measured improved after the program.

Behavior

Results were more varied for the behavior objectives than for knowledge and attitude objectives. The behavior objectives were measured by parents reporting the frequency of their use of 18

different discipline approaches. This measure was Question 10 in the Survey for Parents of Toddlers (see Appendix B).

The results will be separated into two tables. Table 4 will describe the results for the rates of use of effective discipline techniques and will be followed by more detailed discussion.

The non-effective techniques will be noted with results in Table 5 and detail will follow.

TABLE 4

Percentage of Parents Using Effective Discipline Techniques

# On Survey	Technique	Week 1	Week 10
1	Talking/explaining	100%	100%
2	Time out	92%	82%
6	Distract or change activity	85%	91%
7	Consequences	46%	91%
8	Leave the place	85%	91%
18	Show/teach the child what to do instead	100%	100%

The results for the objective to increase parental use of effective discipline indicate five of the six effective approaches gained or maintained usage.

Two of the techniques had been used by 100% of the participants in both the pre and post test reports. "Talking and

explaining" was used daily by all but one at the beginning of the program and by all parents at the end of the program indicating that all parents not only used this technique but used it with almost uniform frequency both before and after the program.

However, the reported incidence for "showing the child what to do instead" changed significantly. For Week One, two parents used this effective technique daily and eleven used it rarely. By the tenth week all eleven participants reported daily use.

The one effective technique on the list, which dropped in frequency was "time-out". This approach was discussed a great deal during the seesions and some detail will follow in the next chapter.

When reviewing the discipline practices which are not effective, the results are indicated in TABLE 5 with detail following.

TABLE 5

Percentage of Parents Using Non-Effective Discipline Techniques

# on Survey	Techniques	Week 1	Week 10
3	Shake child	15%	18%
4	Miss meal	0%	0%
5	Spank bottom	69%	36%
9	Give food	62%	73%
10	Smack fingers	62%	36%
11	Yell/shout	69%	91%
12	Threaten	38%	55%
13	Use other parent	15%	.09%
14	Push/shove	15%	0%
15	Offer treats	54%	64%
16	Offer love	23%	18%
17	Withdraw love	15%	0%

When reviewing the use of discipline practices which are not effective, the results are an encouraging decline in use for 7 of the twelve techniques.

Spanking dropped from 69% in Week One to 36% in Week 10. Using the other parent to discipline dropped from 15% to less than 1% as did the withdrawal of love.

Five of the twelve ineffective approaches actually increased in use over the ten weeks. The giving of food increased from 62% to 73%. "Yell/Shout" increased from 69% to 91% and threatening to

do something they would not actually do increased from 38% to 55%.

Other Results

In comparison to other local parent programs the available results are not comparable. The number of participants who report finding the course useful and the number who would recommend the program to a friend are the measures commonly collected in our community. Both of these questions received the most positive answer by all participants in this particular project. (See Appendix D) Participants indicated they liked the opportunity to talk with other parents, the presentations and the facilitator's sense of humor the best. The only suggestion for improvement was to use more video supplements. Participants were almost unanimous in their suggestion for a similar program focusing on the next stage of development, i.e. three to five years.

Two participants described their success in sharing ideas with friends outside the group. They indicated the problems they had experienced during visits were avoided during their last visit to these out of town friends who also had toddlers. Sharing toys was the main concern.

Also, regarding resources, by sharing our recommended reading lists with the public library we have seen their section on child development receive additional volumes.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

In summary, the results generally met the objectives. Parents' knowledge of child development increased overall. On several occassions participants made reference to child development as the reason for a change in expectations and approaches to behavior.

Parental knowledge of resources appeared less affected and was high initially. There was an increase in those who found friends/family or books most useful. The exchange of phone numbers and writing of book titles indicated the sessions added to these resource components.

The most impact was made on the attitude objectives. Parents indicated they perceived themselves as more knowledgeable about child development and they reported more comfort with discipline issues. Perception of skill levels in disciplining toddlers increased as well.

The behavior objectives addressing the increase in use of effective discipline techniques had a positive result in that five of the six techniques checked showed an increase or the maintenance of 100% use. The rates of use also improved for some, especially the use of "teaching or showing what to do instead" which became a daily occurrance.

Some of the program components which I believe contributed to the positive results were: the use of varried techniques for

learning, the use of humor and primarily the committment of the group.

Hoping to meet the preferences of a variety of learning styles, the sessions generally included a presentation, discussion, activities, demonstration or role play. Flip charts, toys and books were used. On many occasions the parents commented on the fun they were having and the ideas they found useful. Many comments gave credit to their peers. They also reported spouses were reading the borrowed materials. Humor was noted as one of the things they liked most about the program.

The area with less positive results is the use of ineffective discipline. As indicated earlier in TABLE 5, only seven of the twelve non-effective discipline practices decreased. While this is an improvement over varried efforts in past years, where the ineffective approaches remained the same after a behavior program for parents, it clearly needs further study and improvement.

One aspect of the project which raises questions for further study is parent's interpretation of the survey questions. For example, more parents used time out before the program than after. However, the discussions during the sessions indicated several parents had a very punishing version of time out consisting of physical force, yelling and children spending hours in a room. After the sessions redefined the popular technique fewer reported its use. The refined definition may have been a factor.

As well, parents who expressed their belief in very long attention spans for toddlers may have assumed the statement was

relating to a child who was receiving all of the supports and encouragement techniques parents had learned about for facilitating play and attending.

One plan for the future is to develop ways to further clarify parental assumputions. Also to continue learning from this project, parents will be contacted by phone as a reminder that they will receive the post test survey again this fall. The results from the returned questionnaires will be compared to the results already discussed in this report.

Results will also be examined as part of the planning done by the three staff in the parent resource program. In choosing what services to deliver next year, the results will be considered when deciding whether the program is worth repeating as well as which areas may require strengthening. Questionnaires will be revised for future offerings to try to capture parents' understanding of skills and techniques. Triggers for their own use of non-effective discipline would be explored in a future survey as well. Perhaps by gathering information on these trigger behaviors or situations, the program could offer more specific information on effective approaches for parents to use in responding to or preventing the trigger behaviors/situations or their reactions.

The overall strategy will likely be repeated but with some changes in information gathering as mentioned. The sessions will be summarized in a leader's manual for program staff to use as a resource. Results from this and future adaptations will be compared to see if subsequent offerings have similar or differing

impacts.

A summary of this project's results will be shared with program staff and agency administration. Participants in the program also responded enthusiastically to the offer of a summary. They will receive a four page summary in the mail with a follow-up letter. This summary will also accompany our brochure and update package to referral sources as well as our new regional health board.

Overall the results indicate the program accomplished what was intended. The concern to be addressed in improvement efforts will be the further decrease in use of non-effective discipline techniques. One tool under consideration is the use of some sessions with toddlers so more realistic modelling can occur. Videotaping will be considered as well, to be used for confidential feedback to parents and if permitted, to be shown as educational examples. These ideas are on the agenda for a program retreat to consider annual goals.

Generally, the twenty-five hour program produced results which indicate value for effort. Parent's comments indicate they agreed.

Recommendations

The addition of a strong child development component to the common areas of communication and discipline is important as a basis for parental expectations and discipline decisions.

Parent comments and my observations indicate refreshment breaks provide an important opportunity for parents to share ideas and spend the time needed to know each other well enough for an informal support system to develop. These breaks need to be long enough to allow the usual needs such as washroom visits and refreshment as well as the critical sharing among participants.

When appropriate, and as a natural occurance, humor, fun and the light-hearted side of parenting should be included. The group in this project enjoyed themselves while they learned and shared.

Recognition of parental skills, committment, care and effort should be voiced in the group and to individuals as opportunities present themselves.

Needs assessment when planning and on an informal basis throughout a program allows the facilitator to taylor examples and exercises to the group's needs and interests. This communicates interest and a valid response to the concerns expressed by parents. Flexible approaches to the delivery of sessions is important so the participants have some influence.

Facilitators need a range of skills in group work and a strong background knowledge in the content area. Parents often expect to contribute but also to have access to a strong resource person or

team.

The most critical attribute for a facilitator is belief in the value of parents. The ability to see strengths and respect both effort and differences projects a critical message to participants. The facilitator must want to be there.

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APPENDIX A

Sample: Interview Questions for Local Professionals

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

Based on your experience as a professional in this community, please respond to the following questions.

1) How would you rate the knowledge about child development of parents of toddlers:
highly accurate medium low extremely inaccurate

2) What do you think contributes to <u>high</u> levels of parental knowledge of child development?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3) What do you think contributes to <u>low</u> levels of parental knowledge of child development?

_____

_____

_____

4) How would you rate the <u>effectiveness</u> of parental use of discipline with their toddlers?
Extremely Generally Sometimes Generally Extremely
Effective Effective Effective Ineffective Ineffective

5) What are contributing factors for parents effectiveness in discipline?

6) What type of response/intervention would you like to see from a resource program?

7) What are some key points for the response/intervention to include?

8) Other comments, ideas, suggestions.

APPENDIX B

Sample: Survey for Parents of Toddlers

Survey for Parents of Toddlers

(18 months - 30 months) (1/2 years - 2 1/2 years)

Please answer the questions by placing an X in the box beside the answer you have picked. (Select one)

1. I live
   - A. Downtown/Waterways [ ]
   - B. Gregoire [ ]
   - C. Beaconhill [ ]
   - D. Thickwood/Dickensfield [ ]
   - E. Timberlea [ ]
   - F. Abasand Heights [ ]

2. I am a mother [ ]
   father [ ]

3. I am aged
   - 19 or younger [ ]
   - 20 - 25 [ ]
   - 26 - 30 [ ]
   - 31 - 35 [ ]
   - 36 - 40 [ ]
   - 41 or older [ ]

4. Our total family income is
   - less than $20,000 [ ]
   - $20,000 - $30,000 [ ]
   - $31,000 - $40,000 [ ]
   - more than $40,000 [ ]

5. I have _____ (how many?) boy(s) aged _____

   I have _____ (how many?) girl(s) aged _____

6. My child(ren) lives with one [ ] parent or with two [ ] parents

7. **Please Mark an X in one box beside each statement to show if you believe they are True or False for toddlers in general. NOTE: Toddlers are 1 1/2 - 2 1/2 years of age.**

STATEMENT:	**True**	**False**
1. Toddlers can stay close by or follow their parent during a 30 minute visit to the mall.	[ ]	[ ]
2. Toddlers are usually toilet trained by two and a half years.	[ ]	[ ]
3. Toddlers can use at least two word sentences.	[ ]	[ ]
4. Toddlers know right from wrong.	[ ]	[ ]
5. Toddlers can avoid temper tantrums if they want to.	[ ]	[ ]

		True	False
6.	Toddlers understand more words then they say.	[]	[]
7.	Toddlers can follow three part directions. (i.e. Get your Teddy, then put your boots on and wait for me.)	[]	[]
8.	Toddlers will pay attention to pictures in a book for 3 to 5 minutes.	[]	[]
9.	Toddlers can completely undress themselves at bedtime.	[]	[]
10.	Toddlers can usually use the toilet, wipe themselves, wash hands and flush if reminded by the parent.	[]	[]
11.	Toddlers can play alone for 20 to 30 minutes at play <u>other</u> than T.V.	[]	[]
12.	Toddlers share things with other children.	[]	[]
13.	Toddlers ask for help either with words or gestures.	[]	[]
14.	Toddlers can draw a person with at least four parts. (i.e. Head, eyes, mouth, legs)	[]	[]
15.	Toddlers imitate the behavior of their parents.	[]	[]

8. Where and how often do you get information on child development? (Check as many as apply.)

	Once in a while	Often
Family	[]	[]
Friends	[]	[]
Books/Magazines	[]	[]
FCSS	[]	[]
Health Unit	[]	[]
Other _____	[]	[]

_____

9. How do you <u>prefer</u> to get information on child development?

		Like alot	Like somewhat	Don't like
1.	Books, articles	[]	[]	[]
2.	Talking with another parent	[]	[]	[]

		Like alot	Like somewhat	Don't like
3.	Being part of a group discussion with other parents.	[]	[]	[]
4.	Presentations from professionals	[]	[]	[]
5.	Video	[]	[]	[]
6.	Phone call to professional	[]	[]	[]
G.	Other (Please specify) _____	[]	[]	[]

For question 9 above please circle the <u>two</u> which give you the most useful information.

10. **Please mark an X for how often you use the following discipline methods with your toddler.**

		Never	Rarely	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
1.	Talking, explaining	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
2.	Time out (usual number minutes/_____min. location (i.e. Chair, room) _____	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
3.	Shake child	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
4.	Miss a meal	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
5.	Spank on bottom	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
6.	Distract or change activity	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
7.	Consequences Give examples please _____	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
8.	Leave the place and go home	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
9.	Give food to calm child	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
10.	Smack on fingers	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
11.	Yell/Shout	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

		Never	Rarely	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
12.	Threaten to do something you won't really do: (i.e. I'm leaving you here)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
13.	Use other parent (i.e. "Wait till your father gets home".)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
14.	Push, shove	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
15.	Offer treats for behavior rewards	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
16.	Offer love for good behavior (i.e. "I'll really love you if you'll be quiet.")	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
17.	Withdraw love (i.e. I won't love you anymore if you do that.)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
18.	Show/teach the child what to do instead	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
19.	Other _____	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Thank You!

P.S. If you could have a new service or program for parents and/or toddlers what would it be.

APPENDIX C

Sample: Reaction Sheet

REACTION SHEET

Parents of Toddlers
Child Development and Discipline

Week 1 5 10 (Please Circle One)

Please **mark the box** beside the answer that comes **closest** to your **usual** feelings about the idea in the sentence.

1. I feel my knowledge level of child development (toddlers) is..

   [] High [] Medium High [] Medium Low [] Low

2. When I think of what I know about toddler development I feel I ...

   [] Need no more information.
   [] Need a little more information.
   [] Need a fair amount of information.
   [] Need a lot of information.

3. When discipline issues come up in my family I feel ...

   [] Very comfortable.
   [] Fairly comfortable.
   [] Uncomfortable.
   [] Very uncomfortable.

4. In disciplining my toddler I believe I have ...

   [] A large number of skills.
   [] A satisfactory number of skills.
   [] A need for more skills.
   [] A serious need for more skills.

5. Overall, when I think of parenting my toddler I feel ...

   [] Confident
   [] Comfortable
   [] O.K.
   [] A little unsure
   [] Very unsure

6. Please mark the box beside all the items you have used for parenting ideas in the last six months.

[ ] books, articles, magazines
[ ] T.V., video
[ ] friends, family
[ ] parent-toddlers groups (i.e. Moms and Tots)
[ ] parenting class (i.e. STEP)
[ ] call to professional (other than Health Unit) _____ _____ (which agency?)
[ ] call to Parent-Child Resources _____ (warm line)
[ ] other (please describe) _____

7. Please look at the list again and circle the two you found most helpful.

Thank you for helping us with the program design!

Clare

APPENDIX D

Sample: Ten Week Calendar Plan

Calendar plan for implementation activities

WEEK ONE

Call all registered parents to confirm time, place, welcome, etc.

Prepare Room: Chairs, coffee, book display, etc.

Deliver Week One parent education session. Evening 7:00 - 9:30

Welcome, Ice Breaker, Introduction to Topic

Pre Test Administration

Child Development (Toddlers) Session

Closure, Suggestions

Optional Question Period

Co-facilitator feedback, check suggestion box.

Prepare for week two. Monitor 'warm line' and home visit use for frequency and purpose.

WEEK TWO, THREE, FOUR

Prepare Room: Chairs, coffee, book display, etc.

Deliver weeks parent education session. Evening 7:00 - 9:30

Welcome, Ice Breaker, Introduction to Topic

Child Development (Toddlers) Session

Closure, Suggestions

Optional Question Period

Co-facilitator feedback, check suggestion box.

Prepare for following week. Monitor 'warm line' and home visit use

for frequency and purpose.

WEEK FIVE

Prepare Room: Chairs, coffee, book display, etc.

Deliver week fire parent education session.

Welcome, Ice Breaker, Introduction to Topic

Discipline Techniques Session

Reaction Sheet for Participants Perceptions

Closure, Suggestions

Optional Question Period

Co-facilitator feedback, check suggestion box.

Prepare for following week. Monitor 'warm line' and home visit use for frequency and purpose.

WEEK SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE

Prepare room: Chairs, coffee, book display, etc.

Deliver week's parent education session.

Welcome, Ice Breaker, Introduction to Topic

Discipline Techniques Session

Closure, Suggestions

Optional Question Period

Co-facilitator feedback, check suggestion box.

Prepare for following week. Monitor 'warm line' and home visit use for frequency and purpose. Have certificates of participation

prepared for all participants.

WEEK TEN

Prepare room: Chairs, coffee, book display, etc.

Delivery week's parent education session.

- Welcome, Ice Breaker, Introduction to Topic
- Discipline Techniques Session (Shortened)
- Summary of Program Overall
- Reaction Sheets, Post Tests Administered
- Presentation of Certificates
- Closure
- Optional Question Period

Co-facilitator feedback, check suggestion box.

Monitor 'warm line' and home visit use for frequency and purpose.

Analyze data from Pre/Post tests and Reaction Sheets.